RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN
FOR THE
NOMAD ORV TRAIL

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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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NOMAD ORV TRAIL
RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

Reviewed by:

Chief, Division of Resources — Date: 9/27/76

Chief, Division of Operations — Date: 9-28-76

Accepted by:

District Manager — Date: 9-30-76

Carlsbad Resource Area Manager — Date: 10/4/76

Prepared by: Kathy L. Morter

Revised by: Date:

Introduction

The use of off-road vehicles (ORV's) for recreation on public lands has exploded over the last fifteen years. This nationwide trend is reflected locally in a current (1975) demand for southeastern New Mexico of 210,000 annual visits. Demand for 1990 for this region is projected at 317,000 annual visits.[1] Local public input has indicated a need for development of specific areas for ORV use. To date, only 35 miles of trail have been designated for specific use by ORV's in southeastern New Mexico. Formal designation of all public lands as open, closed or restricted for ORV use, as required by E.O. 11644, has been suspended pending issuance of revised regulations in February 1977.

Land use conflicts associated with this upsurge in ORV activity are numerous. Among the most critical are destruction of vegetation and harassment of wildlife, erosion acceleration, destruction of archeological resources, interference with adjacent land uses (livestock and mining operations), and conflicts with non-mechanized recreationists.

Objectives of the Nomad ORV Trail are aimed at minimizing these conflicts and providing a quality recreation experience:

1. To accommodate increasing demand for specified ORV use areas;
2. To concentrate ORV activity in specified areas to protect more environmentally critical areas from deterioration.

It is the purpose of this document to provide guidelines for development, management, and maintenance of the trail system to meet project objectives. Proper management of the trail system should ultimately meet Bureau policy objectives of resource protection, visitor safety, and enhancement of the recreation experience.

Present Situation

The Nomad ORV Trail is located approximately thirty miles south of Carlsbad on U.S. Highway 62/180. The area is included in the Caverns P.U. (06-06), for which the Management Framework Plan (MFP) was completed in December 1974. A decision to develop the Nomad Trail was included in the MFP.

1) Source: New Mexico State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), 1976, State Planning Office.

The 50-mile long trail consists of existing graded roads, existing unimproved trails, created trails and a 1,000 acre intensive use area. The trail is signed along its route, including location signs which are keyed to the trail brochure, available at several distribution points. The trailhead is proposed in an area previously cleared and leveled for drilling operations and now abandoned.

The trail system encompasses 42,000 acres, 12% of which consists of private and state lands. The landscape can be characterized as dry, wind-swept desert shrub flat-land, interlaced with roads and numerous sinks and arroyos. Surrounding lands are used primarily for oil and gas development and livestock grazing. (For more detailed coverage of physical characteristics, refer to the Nomad Trail Environmental Analysis Record (EAR #33).

Visitor use of the trail is expected to be 10,000 visits per year (approximately 2,500 visitor days). Heaviest use is expected on weekends and holidays. Seasonal fluctuation of use, though somewhat higher during summer months, should not be significant. The New Mexico SCORP, 1976 indicates an average distance traveled (one-way) for ORV participation of 67 miles. Carlsbad (30 miles) and White City (12 miles) fall well within this range. Participants from these two cities, as well as a percentage of visitors to nearby Carlsbad Caverns N.P. are expected to make up the bulk of Nomad Trail users. Since there is no public land in Texas available for ORV use, residents of Amarillo, Lubbock and other cities are expected to make the 3-5 hour trip necessary to reach the trail facility.

The Nomad Trail was not designed for competition meets; the intent was rather to accommodate the needs of family and group outings. Organized events of 25 or more riders must first be cleared and permit obtained from the BLM Roswell District Office. The nature of the terrain does not, in most places, provide adequate challenge for dune buggies and four-wheel drive vehicles. Motorcyclists will find the intensive use area most challenging.

Facility Development

Decisions involving recreational facility development - what, where, how many - are based on visitor needs and capacity of the site, on-site physical characteristics, surrounding land use, ease of supervision and maintenance, and budgeting. The objective is to

adequately provide for visitor needs and safety in a manner which will enhance the recreation experience, and preserve the natural character of the site.

First-phase construction on the trail system should include the following minimal support facilities. Future development (additional parking and sanitation facilities) should occur if, after one year of operation, visitor use warrants additional facilities.

1. Trailhead

   a. Parking area - should be designed to:
      - cut dust and hold up during wet weather,
      - accommodate 50 parking spaces,
      - prevent excessive speed, and
      - allow for expansion.

   b. Fence surrounding parking area - should be designed to:
      - keep vehicles in,
      - keep livestock out,
      - allow for expansion, and
      - blend with surrounding landscape.

   c. Waste containers - 6
      Cans should be covered and anchored to insure against gusty winds and theft.

   d. Chemical toilets - 2
      Toilets should be located on the periphery of the parking area, within the fence. Choice of design should involve consideration of maintenance requirements and landscape character.

   e. Information/Registration Board
      Visitors should be required to register. Sign board should include:
      - trail regulations,
      - safety suggestions,
      - registration book, brochures, and questionnaires.

2. Cattleguards

   Cattleguards should be installed at all points where fences cross the trail system (road and trail segments) and at the

trailhead parking area. This will insure efficient movement of vehicles through the trail system, while minimizing impact to livestock operations. Design consideration should include safe passage to motorcycles.

3. Highway Signs

Three directional signs should be located on U.S. Highway 62/180 - one at the turn-off to the trail, the other two ½ mile north and south of the turn-off.

4. Additional Trail Signs

Signs warning of approaching cattleguards should be constructed on either side of each cattleguard. Additional signs - identification, directional, boundary, warning - should be installed where appropriate. (Refer to appendix for a list of trail signs on hand.)

Management

Management of the trail system should involve three phases:

A. Control and safety of visitors;
B. Maintenance of facilities; and
C. Resource protection.

A. Visitor Control and Safety

Initial efforts, following opening of the trail, should be aimed at obtaining accurate visitor use data, upon which additional management decisions will be based. Since requirements for manpower, maintenance, and additional facility development will be determined to a large degree by visitor use specifics, every attempt should be made to obtain accurate and thorough information.

1. Visitor Use

Visitor use volume will be obtained through the use of traffic counters and a registration book to be located at the entrance to the parking area. A sign indicating mandatory registration should be installed adjacent to the information/registration board.

Additional visitor use specifics (length of stay, origin, facility evaluation, suggestions, etc.) will be obtained through the use of questionnaires available at the trailhead information/registration board. (Refer to appendix for a copy of the questionnaire.) On-site informal conversation between staff members and visitors to the Nomad can also be a valuable source of information. Record of such input should be kept on the Maintenance Checklist, also included in the appendix.

Traffic counters (2) should be installed on sign posts at approximate locations indicated on enclosed map of the trail system. The counter located beyond the trailhead and intensive use area will indicate the amount of use being given the established trail portion of the Nomad. If, after three months of operation at this same location, it is determined that the established trail portion is receiving significant use, location of the counters should be changed to indicate specific segments of the trail receiving heaviest use. Location sites for the counters should include county roads, unimproved trails, and created trails. If visitor use volume to the Nomad is high, consideration should be given to ordering and installing additional counters.

During the initial year of operation, an attempt should be made to check the counters at the beginning and end of each week (Monday and Friday) for an indication of weekend use volume. After the initial one-year period, counters should be checked monthly. Traffic counts and condition and location of counters will be recorded on the Maintenance Checklist monthly and annual visitor use tabulations should be recorded on the Visitor Use Summary form, included in the appendix. This will provide an indication of seasonal fluctuation in use, as well as use trend over the years.

2. Crowd Control

The Nomad is not expected to receive a visitor use volume sufficient to warrant crowd control measures. Should visitor use exceed the initial 50-vehicle parking capacity, the following alternatives should be considered:

a. Regulating use through the issuance of mandatory use permits;
b. Assigning extra-duty personnel to the trail during periods of anticipated heavy use, particularly holidays and weekends;
c. Expansion of parking and sanitation facilities.

3. Public Awareness

Success of the Nomad will be largely dependent on a public relations effort to promote public awareness of the trail system. Prior to opening of the facility, news releases should be prepared and trail brochures distributed to the following places:

a. Lincoln National Forest - Carlsbad
b. National Park Service - Carlsbad
c. Carlsbad Caverns National Park
d. Chambers of Commerce: Carlsbad, Hobbs, Artesia, Roswell, Lubbock, Amarillo
e. New Mexico BLM District Offices
f. Nomad Trail trailhead (A temporary structure to hold the brochures will have to be constructed for use until installation of the information/registration board is complete.)
g. Highway tourist information centers

4. Visitor Safety

Visitor safety - the reduction or elimination of hazards - is of primary concern to the proper management of a recreation facility. The following measures should be carried out to promote a safe environment for the public:

a. Design of parking area so as to minimize danger to pedestrians.

b. Posting of signs warning of specific trail hazards at appropriate spots (e.g. junctions, arroyos, curves, cattleguards).

c. Posting of "THINK SAFETY" signs along the trail to serve as a safety reminder.

d. Posting of safety suggestions as part of the trailhead information/registration board:

- Always travel in the company of at least one other rider.

- Make sure someone knows of your trip plans and expected return time.

- Be sure of your gas consumption and mileage limitations.

- Carry plenty of water.

- Stay on roads and trails, except in intensive use area.

- Carry tools and spare parts.

- Always wear helmet, gloves, and boots.

e. Maintenance of clean sanitation facilities and litter-free trail and parking area.

B. Maintenance of Facilities

The trailhead parking area and trail will be maintained to 1) meet established standards for public health and safety, 2) present a clean and pleasing appearance and thereby enhance the recreation experience, and 3) prolong the usefulness of facilities.

The following maintenance items should be performed each time the trail is serviced. Frequency of servicing will be determined by visitor use volume. The Maintenance Checklist (refer to appendix) was designed to promote consistency in data reporting, and to act as a reminder of each of the items requiring attention. It should be completed each time the trail is serviced.

1. Parking Area, Trails, and Roads

The surface of roads, trails, and the parking area should be maintained in good condition. Discretion must be used

here however, because much of the challenge associated with recreational off-road travel derives from potentially hazardous conditions such as ruts, muddy areas, and obstructing vegetation. Loose gravel in the parking area should be spread evenly if it hampers efficient circulation of vehicles.

Due to the unstable nature of the gypsum karst topography in the trail area, roads and trails should be checked for collapse features. Holes of significant size to present a safety hazard will require closing of that portion of the trail and re-routing to avoid the area of potential collapse.

2. Fencing and Cattleguards

Cattleguards and the fence surrounding the parking area should be maintained in good condition. Replace and/or reset defective sections.

3. Signs

It is important that trail signs (particularly location and boundary signs) be maintained in good condition. Missing signs should be replaced as soon as possible to insure efficient circulation through the trail system. Mutilated or downed signs should be replaced or repaired, as needed.

4. Waste Cans and Collection

Contracts will be let for refuse collection. Care should be taken to insure that collection complies with stipulations outlined in 40 CFR, Part 241, Guidelines for the Land Disposal of Solid Waste. Maintenance of waste containers should include repair and replacement of damaged or missing parts. Cans should be tightly covered and securely anchored.

5. Toilets

Maintenance should include replacement and repair of damaged or missing parts. The toilets should be checked periodically to insure proper operation. Contracts will be let for cleaning and servicing of the facilities.

6. Litter

The trailhead area should be maintained free of litter. If waste containers are found to be insufficient, provisions should be made for installing additional cans to meet the need. If, while canvassing the area, particular spots along the trail are continually found to be cluttered with litter, waste cans should be provided at these spots. Cooperation from local motorcycle user groups might be solicited to help maintain a litter-free facility.

7. Questionnaires and Brochures

Collection of completed questionnaires should occur each time the Nomad is serviced. Data should be compiled and interpreted on a monthly basis for analysis of visitor use trend. Questionnaires and trail brochures should be restocked periodically to maintain a supply adequate to meet demand during periods of heavy use.

C. Resource Protection

Concern for protection of the natural and cultural resources in the area encompassed by the trail system centers around surface disturbance by ORV traffic. Significant disturbance will occur in the intensive use area and in areas where vehicles stray from existing roads and trails. Adverse impacts will include surface soil disturbance, collapse of sub-surface tunnel networks, and destruction of vegetation - all of which will contribute to accelerated erosion by wind and an increased sediment load in the Black and Pecos River drainages. Impacts on wildlife in the area will include occasional "road kills", destruction of nesting sites and food sources, and harassment due to noise. Additional problems could arise over harassment of livestock.

Every effort should be made to minimize these adverse impacts. Accomplishment of this objective will require careful monitoring of vehicular impact over time. A photographic monitoring system will provide concrete indications of the rate of environmental deterioration in relation to visitor use volume. Specifics of the monitoring system are as follows:

1. Permanently marked monitoring stations will be established in strategic locations throughout the intensive use area and along established trails. Sites will be chosen for their proximity to permanent landmarks, potential to show deterioration, and to represent a composite of all terrain and vegetation types.

2. Site number and compass direction of photo will be permanently inscribed in location markers. Site number, date, compass direction, and narrative describing any factors relevant to interpretation of the photo (including weather) should be recorded on the Maintenance Checklist.

3. Prints are preferable to slides. The same brand and ASA rated film should be used for all pictures. Photos should be taken once a month during the first year of operation, once every three months after that.

4. Photos should be taken at 75 power, the magnification which most closely approximates what the human eye sees. A 75-260 power zoom telephoto lens is suggested for use.

5. Analysis of impact will involve comparison of photos for changes in color, texture, form, and line evident in the landscape.

6. Photos will not be restricted to monitoring stations only. Any evidence of ORV-induced deterioration on lands encompassed by the trail system should be photographed, and pertinent data recorded. Particular concern should be given the intensive use area. Evidence of other use problems such as litter and over-crowding should also be photographed.

7. Information derived from the photographs will provide input into:

    - the planning and development of future ORV facilities, and,
    - future planning decisions regarding management of the Nomad.

8. Location of each monitoring station and compass direction of each photo is included in the appendix. Photo stations are also indicated on the enclosed map.

Additional effort should be made to promote public awareness of the need for resource protection. This will be partially accomplished through information provided at the Nomad through trail signs, the information/registration board, and the trail brochure. Staff assigned to the Nomad should take every opportunity to explain to visitors the problems associated with ORV's and the desert environment, and further stress the importance of following trail regulations.

Manpower

Following official opening of the trail, the facility should be serviced twice a week, as outlined in the text, for light maintenance and observation purposes. At the very least, traffic counts should be recorded.

Once facilities are installed, and weekend visitor use found to be significant, a technician should be assigned to the Nomad one day per weekend for two months. Duties will include:

1. Maintenance of facilities, including litter pick-up,
2. Assisting visitors,
3. Observing whether regulations are being followed, and
4. Recording of observations on the Maintenance Checklist.

Following this two-month period, permanent manpower requirements should become evident once visitor use of the trail is established. At a minimum, servicing of the trail should be carried out, as outlined in the Maintenance Checklist, by staff during the regular 40-hour week on a regular basis. An additional technician may be assigned to patrol the Nomad as part of a routine patrol of the district.

Future Development and Management

If, following the first year of operation, visitor use volume indicates a need for expanding the trail facility, the following measures should be considered:

1. Lengthening the trail,
2. Establishing a more primitive trail parallel to the existing established trail,
3. Increasing parking capacity at the trailhead,

4. Installing additional toilets and waste containers,
5. Constructing shade structures at the trailhead, and
6. Installing picnic/overnight camping facilities at the trailhead.

Increased visitor use and facility expansion will require additional manpower to perform maintenance and surveillance of the trail system. Increased duties may warrant assigning a technician to the facility permanently during weekends and holidays.

The Nomad Trail is a pilot project for the District. Every effort should be made to observe and record evidence of visitor use specifics, maintenance problems, vandalism, and environmental deterioration. A good data base will provide valuable input into any future planning and management efforts for the Nomad and other proposed ORV facilities.

APPENDIX

NOMAD TRAIL QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed to provide us with information about you - the visitor - and to give you the opportunity to express your ideas for improving this facility. The information you provide will help us better manage the Nomad to suit your needs and to plan for future ORV facilities. For further questions or comments, please contact the BLM Roswell District Office.

ABOUT YOU

Where do you live? (City,State) _____

Number in party? _____

Check one: ____Family ____Friends _____Riding Club

Ages? (Indicate how many in each age group.)

_____15 and under; _____16-25; _____26-35;

_____36-45; _____46-55; _____over 55

Type of Vehicle(s)? Check one:

_____Motorcycle; _____Mini-Bike; _____Jeep;

_____Dunebuggy; _____Other

Estimate number of times per year each group member rides? _____

On what lands do you ride?

_____Private; _____State; _____Federal

Length of stay at the Nomad (Hours)? _____

Would you be interested in a follow-up interview?

_____Yes _____No

If so, please leave name, address, phone:

ABOUT THE NOMAD

Where did you hear about the Nomad?

Check one: Was the Nomad

_____Your primary destination point?

_____A stopover point while travelling through the area?

Evaluate the established trail portion of the Nomad for

Safety: ____Poor; ____Fair; ____Good; ____Excellent

Challenge: ____Poor; ____Fair; ____Good; ____Excellent

Litter: ____Poor; ____Fair; ____Good; ____Excellent

Evaluate the off-trail intensive use area for

Safety: ____Poor; ____Fair; ____Good; ____Excellent

Challenge: ____Poor; ____Fair; ____Good; ____Excellent

Litter: ____Poor; ____Fair; ____Good; ____Excellent

Additional Comments:

NOMAD TRAIL MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

Date _____ Name(s) _____

I. TRAFFIC COUNTS

Counter	Location	Meter Reading
#1		
#2		

II. GENERAL MAINTENANCE

Item	(✓)	Work Completed/Correction Needed
1. Parking area and trail surface		
2. Fences		
3. Cattleguards		
4. Signs		
5. Waste cans		
6. Toilets		
7. Litter		
8. Questionnaire collection		
9. Re-stock brochures and questionnaires		

III. PHOTOGRAPHS

Station #	Compass Direction	Weather Conditions	Comments
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

IV. GENERAL COMMENTS

(Visitor use specifics, vandalism, environmental deterioration, etc.)

VISITOR USE SUMMARY FORM

Reporting Area _____ Reporting Year _____

	Visits per Month	Visitor Days per Month	Source of Data	Remarks	Prepared By
Jan.					
Feb.					
Mar.					
Apr.					
May					
June					
July					
Aug.					
Sept.					
Oct.					
Nov.					
Dec.					

Total Visits Per Year _____ Total Visitor Days/Year _____

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY DESIGNATIONS
(As Indicated on Brochure)

GENERAL:

The indicated degrees-of-difficulty are a generalization of the condition of the trail segment referred to, and may vary considerably for a short distance within the segment.

The degree-of-difficulty is shown only as an indicator to help in determining which part of the system the ORV operator wishes to travel.

The degrees-of-difficulty expressed for the trail segments are proportionate; that is, what may be a "3" degree for a novice at 10 mph may be a "3" for the experienced rider at 20 mph. However, the designations are relative as the difficulty increases, and should give all ORV operators a general idea of what to expect on any section of the trail.

The degrees-of-difficulty will be indicated on a trail system map to be published. The ORV operator may orient himself as to location by using the map, which is correlated with numbered signs posted throughout the system. The sign/map system will permit the ORV operator to select preferred options as to both length of route and degree-of-difficulty.

Explanation of "Degree of Difficulty"

1. Smooth. Asphalt, concrete or oil/gravel pavement. Principal hazard is other vehicular traffic.

2. Easy to travel. Smooth gravel or caliche-surfaced road. Usually two lanes in width.

3. Easily negotiated by keeping an eye open for bad spots. Usually a maintained road with gravel, caliche or natural surface. Fairly smooth with some minor ruts and small areas of loose sand or small rock.

4. Not bad to travel, but requires careful riding or driving. Usually a sporadically maintained road, and should be ridden or driven at reduced speed. May have much loose rock/sand, or may have quite a few rough spots with ruts and holes. Usually "ranch road" type.

5. Requires extra care, especially for novices. A non-maintained ranch road or trail, quite rough in spots. May have bad ruts, rocks, holes and vegetation growing close alongside trail.

6. Riders should travel only in company of other riders. Ranch road or trail of poor quality or connecting-link segment created especially for trail system. Vegetation frequently close alongside trail.

7. Extremely rocky or sandy ranch trail or bike trail. Can be quite rough and somewhat steep in spots.

8. Very rough trail or ranch road. Has extremely high levels of rocks, sand or rough riding/driving surface. Some very steep inclines. Should be attempted only by experienced riders or drivers.

9. High difficulty trail. Can be steep hill or arroyo face, arroyo bottom (stream bed) or a steep and rocky hill trail.

10. Extremely difficult, for experts only. A very steep and/or rough trail, frequently with little room for manuevering.

Types of Signs on Hand

Trail Bike Symbol
Trail bike symbol with slash
Recreation vehicle symbol
Recreation vehicle symbol with slash
Numbered consecutively, 1-100 (2 sets)
Large single arrows
PROTECT YOUR ENVIRONMENT - KEEP ON ROADS AND TRAILS
90 degree left turn
90 degree right turn
Curve in trail (double curve) symbol
4-way jct. symbol
ENTERING NOMAD ORV TRAIL SYSTEM
"Y" jct. symbol
"T" jct. symbol
Green tag - PLEASE LEAVE GATE OPEN
ARROYO CROSSING
NEW MEXICO - TEXAS STATE LINE
THINK SAFETY
NOMAD ORV TRAIL SYSTEM - TRAVEL AT YOUR OWN RISK
NOMAD TRAIL SYSTEM: TRAIL HEAD AREA ½ MILE AHEAD
NOMAD TRAIL SYSTEM - TRAIL HEAD AREA
GATE AHEAD
2-WAY TRAFFIC
NOMAD ORV TRAIL SYSTEM
LIVESTOCK WATERING - DON'T LOITER
STOP
GATE AHEAD
Curve symbol - pointed at both ends for use either left or right
Double symbol (trail bike and ORV vehicle)
Double symbol with prohibited slash
ORV USE AREA STAY THIS SIDE
HIGH-DIFFICULTY USE AREA KEEP INSIDE FLAGGED AREA

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